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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS BELIZEAN GANG LEADER
OF MULTI-TON COCAINE IMPORTATION OFFENSES**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that GEORGE ENRIQUE HERBERT, a Belizean gang leader who worked with Mexican and Colombian drug cartels, was convicted by a jury in Manhattan federal court late yesterday on multiple cocaine importation charges.

The four-count Indictment charged HERBERT with conspiring with others to import ton-quantities of cocaine into the United States between March 2001 and August 2002, and with three separate instances of shipping cocaine from the waters off Belize to Mexico, with the intent or knowledge that the drugs would be imported into the United States.

According to the evidence at trial, HERBERT was enlisted in March 2001 by a corrupt Belizean government official working with the Mexican Juarez Cartel to assist in the smuggling of ton-quantities of cocaine from the Atlantic coast of Colombia to Calderitas, Mexico. HERBERT, assisted by armed members of a

Belize City street gang, the "George Street Crew," received the one-ton-plus cocaine shipments in the waters off Belize from speedboats dispatched by high-level Medellin cocaine supplier Mauricio Ruda-Alvarez. HERBERT and his associates then transported the shipments through the reefs and small islands off Belize to the port of Calderitas, Mexico. In Calderitas, Juarez Cartel operatives, assisted by corrupt Mexican police, took custody of the cocaine and shipped it to the United States. The evidence at trial established that in this manner, HERBERT participated in the importation of at least 12 tons of cocaine into the United States, as well as two cocaine shipments, totaling over two tons, that were foiled by the United States Coast Guard in the spring of 2002.

The jury convicted HERBERT on all four counts of the Indictment. The jury also found that HERBERT used firearms in furtherance of the narcotics crimes, and that he managed and supervised others in the offenses. Each of the four counts of conviction carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment, and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

HERBERT is scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge SIDNEY H. STEIN, who presided over the trial, on March 5, 2005.

Jorge Manuel Torres Teyer and Victor Manuel Adan Carrasco, leaders of the Juarez Cartel in Belize and the Mexican

state of Quintana Roo, with whom HERBERT conspired, pled guilty in Manhattan federal court in 2003, and were sentenced in May 2004 to terms of 38 years' imprisonment and 22 years' imprisonment, respectively. Mauricio Ruda-Alvarez, the Colombian cocaine supplier, was found murdered in the trunk of a car in Medellin in October 2002. The evidence at trial established that two months prior, in August 2002, Ruda-Alvarez had commissioned a failed attempt to kidnap HERBERT over a shipment of cocaine HERBERT had stolen.

Yesterday's conviction was the result of a joint investigation involving the United States Attorney's Office, the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force (the "Strike Force"), offices of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") in New York, Belize, Mexico and Colombia, the Belize Directorate of Public Prosecutions, the Belize Police Department, and the Colombian Department of Administrative Security.

Mr. KELLEY praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the Strike Force, the DEA, and law enforcement authorities in Belize and Colombia.

Assistant United States Attorneys RICHARD SULLIVAN and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

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